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SUBJECT: RAB MAKES SEVERAL JMB ARRESTS - INVESTIGATIONS
INTO MOTIVES UNDERWAY

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis; reason 1.4(d)

11. (C) On January 7, members of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) raided at least four separate locations in Narayanganj, which is an area approximately 15-20 miles southeast of Dhaka and arrested six members of Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). The raids were based on information derived from RAB questioning of two JMB members arrested on December 29, 2006. (See paras 4-5 for arrestees' names.) In the January 7 raids, RAB also seized 80 improvised iron grenade shells and 31 packs (500 grams each) of power gel explosive from one location and one detonator and one book on Jihad from another location. According to RAB, raids are continuing.

12. (S) At the time of their arrest on December 29, the two men had with them four pistols and two simulated RAB uniforms complete with insignia. On December 30, the media reported an additional seven sets of black coveralls were recovered by RAB from a house rented by JMB members. (NOTE: RAB dresses in all black uniforms. END NOTE.)

13. (S) According to DGFI, under questioning, the December 29 arrestees said they were sent to Dhaka "to kill lawmakers," although they did not know which party's lawmakers they were to kill. They said, however, that the goal was to create unrest and a situation conducive to a military takeover. In addition, they intended to force further delay of the as yet unscheduled executions of JMB and JMJB leaders Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam, alias Bangla Bhai. Rahman and Islam have been moved to another, ostensibly more secure, location.

Arrestees

14. (S) According to media reports, the two JMB members arrested December 29 were Abdul Rahman (aliases Alal and Fahad) and Saiful Islam, alias Russell. Abdul Rahman is believed also to operate under the alias "Arif" and has been sought in conjunction with the August 17, 2005 nationwide bombings. These two remain in RAB custody.

15. (C) The media also reports that the six men arrested January 7 were identified by RAB as Moazzem Miah, from Tekpara Barabari in Araihaazar upazila; Abdul Al Naim, from Hirilal Majhipara in Rupganj upazila; Taiyabur Rahman, from Hirilal Majhipara in Rupganj upazila; Mofijul Islam, from Konabari in Sonargaon upazila; Masum Billah, from Konabari in Sonargaon upazila; and Mohammad Mahbub, from Farazi Kanda in Bandar upazila. These six are in Police custody and will be questioned. (Note: Wide variations exist in the English spellings of names and places in Bangladesh. End Note.)

Comment

¶6. (S) It is too early to tell if these arrests and seizures indicate a major resurgence or regrouping of JMB. Police and Army units are currently engaged in maintaining law and order during political protests in Dhaka and throughout the country, which they claim has resulted in reduced focus on other threats and provided groups like JMB opportunities to operate more freely. We do not know enough yet to speculate about JMB's specific targets or motives. Regardless, a JMB attack now would further complicate an already difficult political situation and would contribute to existing political uncertainty.

Reporting Note

¶7. (S) This report draws heavily on discussions with ROAL. They will be reporting similar information via intelligence channels. Both this cable and ROAL's report (TD-314-01663-07) should be read together and not as independently corroborating materials.
BUTENIS